

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Congressman John Hall (D-NY) today praised the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey for holding meetings with and listening to various local stakeholder groups on matters related to Stewart International Airport and encouraged the agency to establish a formal process for public input on the future growth and operation of the airport. The Port Authority recently approved the lease acquisition of Stewart Airport and is poised to take over the airport in the fourth quarter of 2007.

"Ensuring that the broad range of stakeholders interested in Stewart Airport, including local municipalities, labor and business organizations, environmental groups and other community leaders, can participate in a more regular and formal dialogue with Port Authority will allow concerns from these groups to be considered and incorporated early in the planning process," Hinchey and Hall wrote in a letter sent today to Port Authority Executive Director Anthony E. Shorris. "Such a dialogue will hopefully help to build a broad consensus for the responsible development of the Airport and avoid the antagonism and obstruction that has unfortunately become all too familiar since the privatization of the Airport."

Hinchey and Hall feel that it is critical for the Port Authority to formally take into consideration the thoughts and concerns of local stakeholders as the agency looks to enhance the airport's role in the region. The congressmen noted that in recent years, the development of Stewart Airport was often held up as the result of litigation brought forward by local citizen groups that felt that their concerns were not being considered and addressed.

"We hope that as you move forward in your final acquisition of the Airport and the development of new management at the Airport, you will strongly consider establishing a public input mechanism that will respond to the need for increased stakeholder input into the planning and future development of the Airport," Hinchey and Hall wrote to Shorris. "Establishing a more open and inclusive public participation process will allow Stewart Airport to realize its full potential while doing so in a way that benefits the entire region."

Stewart Airport sits on the line that divides the congressional districts that Hinchey and Hall represent.

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